



NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL



A Daily Publication of the 2003 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Friday, October 10, 2003

Mike and Cos (also known as “Fric & Frac”)

– by Barbara Sellon
Buffalo VA Medical Center –

Mike Battisto and Cosimo “Cos” DiPierro, Sr., from the Albany VA men’s choir, are also known as “Fric & Frac” because of the comedy routines that they perform as part of the Stratton VA Medical Center’s Men’s Choir shows.

Battisto and DiPierro, now both 79 years old, first met at age 17 while working as stockboys at a grocery store in the Albany area. They became lifelong friends and enlisted in the Air Force together. DiPierro served as a radio operator on a B-17 and flew 30 missions in Germany.

Following military service, Battisto became a carpenter, and DiPierro worked as a supervisor at a cement plant. They lived about 20 miles apart and never lost touch with one another. When Battisto was married, he asked DiPierro to be his best man.



Cosimo “Cos” DiPierro, better know as “Frac”



Mike Battisto, better know as “Fric”

This is the first Festival for the two men, and both are surprised at the amount of work involved in this new experience. They began performing together as “Fric & Frac” about three years ago, with their first act being an impression of the Andrews Sisters, complete with dresses and wigs.

Music Therapist Rachelle Vishneowski began the Albany VA Men’s Choir in 1990, purely as a singing group. It has since evolved to perform a 75-minute variety show with 17 to 18 members. Ten of those members are attending the Festival this year.

Battisto and DiPierro say they “live for the choir.” They help brainstorm for new themes, craft props, put choir books together, and describe themselves as the “nuts and bolts of the choir.” They are not sharing all the details, but will be performing “Lovely Bunch of Coconuts,” complete with grass skirts, in the next show.

The group performs 20 shows or so each year, often at community nursing homes. When asked how they felt about the experience, Battisto said, “I thank the Lord I’m not sitting there,” as DiPierro added, “It’s a good feeling, knowing I’m doing something to be proud of.”

“Fric & Frac” performed “Strolling in the Park,” their take-off on Ruth Buzzi and Artie Johnson’s “Laugh-In” routine, at the Oklahoma VA Medical Center on Thursday. Both men said their life’s motto is “anything for a laugh, because laughter is the best medicine.”



**“Hitch your wagon to a star.”
- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

American Legion Auxiliary Co-sponsors Festival for the Third Year!



The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) is a patriotic women's service organization of nearly one million members. It was founded in 1919 to support the work of the American Legion. Through its nearly 10,500 units located in every state and some foreign countries, the Auxiliary embodies the spirit of America that has prevailed through war and peace. It sponsors volunteer programs on the national and local levels focusing on three major areas: veterans, young people and the community.

Auxiliary members are interested in restoring the veteran and his family to normal function - physically, mentally, socially and vocationally. During 2002 and 2003, ALA members donated \$4.4



ALA volunteers...

million to veterans programs, and gave 2.5 million hours of volunteer service to veterans. Members provide emotional support and cheerful companionship while attending to the hospitalized, disabled and homebound veterans' physical comforts.

In a single year, veterans' programs utilized the services of more than 100,000 hospital field and home service volunteers who donated millions of dollars and millions of hours to assist veterans. The Auxiliary's gift shops and holiday parties have become an essential part of VA programs. The Poppy program provides therapy and a means



...helping with costumes...

of earning money for disabled and hospitalized veterans and their families. The American Legion Auxiliary became a national co-sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in 2000, joining the Department of Veterans Affairs and Help Hospitalized Veterans. You have probably seen ALA members at the Festival all week, volunteering to help the participants at meals, in the hospitality suite, the costume room and throughout all aspects of the Festival – just as they do at VA medical centers across the nation every day of the year. The auxiliary has contributed significantly to the Creative Arts Festival, donating considerable financial



...and with hospitality!

support, offering assistance with materials and supplies, judging and hospitality for local competitions and the national Festival.

According to Katherine Morris, national president of ALA, "Our sponsorship is a source of pride for us, for it is indeed an honor to be associated with the veterans who served our country and who helped keep America free."

When you see an American Legion Auxiliary member this week, be sure to thank them for their sponsorship of this wonderful event and their steadfast service to all American veterans!



From the Festival



Meet the Artist



Michael Ounjian's
"French Red House"

Michael Ounjian was born in Los Angeles on June 16, 1948 and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in the '60's, where he became a Navy photojournalist. He has worked as a professional photographer all of his life in all areas of photography including portraits, architecture, weddings and sports.

On April 27, 1999, Ounjian had a massive stroke due to high blood pressure. The stroke paralyzed his right side and caused him to lose his speech. Since his stroke, Ounjian attends a VA outpatient clinic every Tuesday and Thursday. His speech therapist at his VA hospital said he would never speak again, but thought painting might help him due to his artistic eye for photography. Since he was right handed, he is now using his left hand.

Ounjian's artwork will be featured on the cover of the VA Journal of Research Rehabilitation and Development (JRRD) in 2004. JRRD is a bi-monthly publication that is distributed to an international audience of more than 5,000 readers and serves as a resource for scientists, doctors and veterans with disabilities.

Meet him today during "Meet the Artist - Michael Ounjian" in the Hospitality Room (Room 318) where staff from the Journal are your hosts. Ounjian will be on hand to meet you.

Get to Know Your Materials



To start or reacquaint yourself with drawing and sketching, all you need is some sketch paper (why not get a sketchbook just for lessons and practice?) and a B pencil.

Use a page of your sketchbook and have a scribble! Try round loopy marks, ziz-zags, light lines and heavy dark lines. Try shading from light to dark and back again. Try all of your pencils and pens. Make some different marks and then drag your eraser across them. Which pencils erase well? Which smudge? It can be handy to make a note of which pencil makes which mark. Your page might look something like this:



Great! You are on your way to becoming an artist. Experimenting with materials is something all artists do – you will get to know how each medium behaves when it is just on a piece of sketch paper, not halfway through a major piece. Happy accidents are often the inspiration for great works of art!



Writing Songs, Lyrics and Music

Songwriting Theme, Idea, Structure, Impact:

- The idea should be fairly unique or a unique way of addressing a more common theme. It has been written "there are no new emotions," there are just new ways of describing or expressing them...
- The song should generate an emotion or feeling. Make them want to laugh, cry, feel romantic, etc.
- The song should have a structure with a logical beginning, middle and end. The Verse-Chorus, Verse-Chorus-Bridge and Verse-Verse-Bridge-Verse (or AABA) are the most common and a good starting point.
- The idea should be one that a lot of people can understand and relate to.

Songwriting Lyrics:

- Have a strong opening line. One technique is to start with a place or opening scene "Busted flat in Baton Rouge...", "Sittin' in the mornin' sun...", "This aint no disco... This is LA...", etc.
- Make every word count.
- Use conversational lyrics, not poetical. This is a pretty well accepted convention, but there can always be exceptions, of course.
- Have a memorable (identifiable) hook (usually in the title).
- Be sure that your lyrics are contemporary (not old fashioned).

Getting Started/Restarted (writers block):

Sometimes, the hardest thing to do is to generate that initial idea. Keep a list of "titles" available and add to this list as the ideas come. Then, when the time is right, review this list and you will have ideas to start from.

If you run into that "second verse brain lock" try rearranging the structure a little. Make the first verse the second and go back in time to create a new first verse, or even start out with the chorus and work into the next verse. Another tip is to create a new "thread" or second story line within the song when stuck on a partially written song. This can work out if you can tie it all together, but you need to stay focused on your main theme to really make this work.

Songwriting, Music:

Remember, the music includes: The melody, the rhythm (groove), the harmonies, the background chords, the melodic rhythm, the musical hook, and more. But it is not just the melody (although this is one of the most important ingredients).

- Keep the melody interesting (a balance of variety and repetition, range, intervals and scales/modes as needed and melodic rhythm).
- Keep the rhythm interesting.
- The background harmony is totally up to what fits the song and melody. Standard major and/or minor chords, 7ths, inversions, fifths alone, octaves alone.
- Have music that fits the lyrics. You know sad lyrics - sad (slow, minor maybe) music, happy lyrics - happy (fast or upbeat) music...

Quote of the Day

"A sculptor is a person who is interested in the shape of things, a poet in words, a musician by sounds."

— Henry Moore

Today's
Weather



82°

Partly Cloudy



Medical Support Room

The Medical Support Room is in room 1111. If you have a medical concern or issue, please contact your team leader. Medical support has a registered nurse on duty 24 hours a day. You can call the nurse at extension 1111 or go directly to the room.

Meet with Your Team Leader

Meet with your team leader every morning (except Sunday) at 8:30 am on the 2nd floor of the hotel. The Sunday meeting will be at 11:30 am.

Hospitality Room

The Hospitality Room, manned by friendly volunteers, offers snacks, soft drinks, juices, and coffee for all Festival participants, staff and volunteers.

Open daily from 9 am to 10 pm in room 318.

Transportation to the Airport on Sunday

Be sure to be in the hotel lobby with all luggage packed, identified and not locked at least two and a half hours before your flight departure time.



Friday, October 10

Breakfast

Danish and Assorted Muffins
Scrambled Eggs, Crispy Bacon, Breakfast Potatoes
Country Biscuits with Sausage Gravy, Assorted Dry Cereals
Assorted Fruit Juices, Starbuck's Coffee and Milk

Lunch

Potato Salad, Carrot Raisin Salad
Marinated Mushroom Salad
Chef's Selection of Vegetables
Yankee Pot Roast with Pan Gravy and Vegetables
Grilled Chicken Breast with Red Pepper Cream Sauce
Variety of Pies and Cakes
Coffee and Iced Tea

Dinner

Performers at Rose State College Performing Arts Theater

Buffet of Sliced Baked Ham and Chicken Fried Steak
Mashed Potatoes with Cream Gravy
Green Beans
Tossed Salad with Assorted Dressings
Dinner Rolls with Butter
Hot Fruit Cobbler
Coffee, Iced Tea, Water

Artists at the Westin Hotel

Tossed Salad with Assorted Dressings
Julienne Vegetable Salad, Pasta Salad
Chef's Choice of Vegetable
Sliced Top Sirloin of Beef with Sautéed Mushrooms
Blackened Mahi Mahi over Cilantro Fruit Salsa
Assorted Terrines, Cakes, and Pies
Starbuck's Coffee and Iced Tea

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

ARTISTS

PERFORMERS

7 – 8:30 am

Breakfast

– Westin Hotel, Century Ballroom

8:30 am – Meet with Team Leader

9:00 am – Noon

Art Workshop #4 – Native American Crafts

– Grand Pavilion, Suite #167

Noon – 1:00 pm

Lunch

– Westin Hotel, Century Ballroom

1:30 – 4:30 pm

Completion of artwork projects

5:30 – 6:30 pm

Dinner

– Westin Hotel, Century Ballroom

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Drumming Workshop

– Grand Pavilion

7 am

7:30

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7 – 8:30 am

Breakfast

– Westin Hotel, Century Ballroom

8:30 am – Meet with Team Leader

9:00 am – Load Buses

9:30 – 11:00 am

Tour of Oklahoma City National Memorial

9:00 am – Noon – Dry tech (no performers) at Rose State College

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Lunch

– Westin Hotel, Century Ballroom

1:00 pm – Performers depart for Rose State College Performing Arts Theater

1:30 – 5:30 pm – Technical rehearsal at theater – all performers

5:45 – 6:45 pm

Dinner

– Rose State Performing Arts Theater

6:45 pm

Performers into costume – Make-up on soloists only – Sound check for orchestra

7:15 – 10:00 pm

Dress Rehearsal

10:00 pm – Depart for hotel

“Hitch your wagon to a star.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson